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TAGS: [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [XB](#)  
SUBJECT: A/S FRIED BRIEFS NATO PERMREPS ON SECRETARY'S  
CONSULTATIONS IN MOSCOW

Classified By: EUR A/S Fried for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On May 16 Assistant Secretary Fried told NATO PermReps that US-Russian relations, Kosovo, and the internal Russian political climate were the principal subjects of the Secretary's discussions with President Putin, FM Lavrov, and others in Moscow. The Russians took on board the message that they needed to cool their rhetoric against the U.S. The Secretary found little common ground on Kosovo and much concern about precedent despite her concerted push-back that Kosovo is sui generis. She argued Kosovo had to be resolved on its own merits. A strong message of EU unity from Chancellor Merkel in Samara will be a key next step. Fried said the challenge of dealing with a more assertive Russia was to pursue partnership where possible and to push back when necessary. In response to questions from Permreps Fried reported the Russians said little about CFE and U.S. missile defense. End Summary.

#### RUSSIA AGREES TO COOL THE RHETORIC

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¶2. (C) EUR/AS Fried briefed Allied PermReps on the Secretary's meetings with President Putin, FM Lavrov, former

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PM Primakov, and civil society representatives in Moscow that had concluded the day before. Fried's briefing and the following lively Q and A, focused on Kosovo, frozen conflicts, CFE, Iran, and Russian domestic politics. Fried said the Secretary had made clear that the U.S. could manage relations with Russia that included areas of disagreement as well as cooperation, but would not tolerate constant rhetorical attacks that had risen to an offensive pitch. As evidence the message got through, FM Lavrov publicly admitted that the tone needed lowering.

#### MANAGING KOSOVO DIFFERENCES

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¶3. (C) Fried told NATO PermReps the Secretary had long, hard discussions on Kosovo with both Putin and Lavrov. They firmly opposed both the draft UNSC resolution and the core concept of supervised independence for Kosovo. They expressed continued concern about the precedent that an independent Kosovo would pose for other separatist regions, arguing that either territorial integrity or self-determination needed to be applied consistently across the board. They asked rhetorically how they could explain to Abkhaz separatists why they could not have independence if Kosovars did. The Secretary pointed out that the world was full of separatist movements, and there was no single formula for resolving them all. Kosovo, she insisted, had to be settled on its own merits and was sui generis.

¶4. (C) Fried told NATO PermReps that none of the Secretary's interlocutors showed their cards regarding a UNSC veto. However, Lavrov said again that Russia would not be "more

Serbian than the Serbs." Putin and Lavrov seemed to acknowledge that if Serbia was willing to give up Kosovo as the price of joining the West, they would not stand in its way. Fried judged that Serbian President Tadic might accept such an outcome, but Prime Minister Kostunica never would. More broadly, it was clear that the Russians have not yet decided what they will do in the UNSC endgame.

#### EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY ESSENTIAL

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¶15. (C) Fried urged the Europeans, particularly Germany as EU President, to hold firm on Kosovo at the upcoming EU-Russia Summit. He credited EU unity, along with U.S.-EU solidarity, for steadily building support in the Security Council for the draft resolution. By U.S. count, he said, UNSC votes in favor had risen from 5-6 to 11-12 in recent weeks, adding that Russia's Balkans director D/FM Titov did not dispute that assessment.

#### OTHER SEPARATIST CONFLICTS

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¶16. (C) Fried cited some easing of hard-line positions in Moscow, noting that Russia had criticized South Ossetian separatist leader Kokoity after his forces had humiliated Russian peacekeepers, forcing them to the ground in a recent encounter. Fried said the Russians did not want a crisis in either of the separatist regions of Georgia. Russia had allowed the rollover of the UNOMIG mandate and was showing a more positive attitude toward Georgia overall. One of the Russians acknowledged that their confrontation with Georgia last fall had revealed "a lack of elegance."

#### LETTING UKRAINE CHART ITS OWN COURSE

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¶17. (C) Responding to questions from NATO PermReps about Russian attitudes toward Ukraine, Fried said Moscow had not recently complained about U.S. interference. Genuine

blue-orange differences had emerged in Ukraine, and Fried said the U.S. would not try to manipulate those (as Russia had done during the Orange Revolution). He commented that PM Yanukovych was "growing into his own person" since his initial role as Russia's stooge in Kyiv.

#### MORE CONSTRUCTIVE ON IRAN, MD, CFE

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¶18. (C) NATO PermReps asked principally about current Russian thinking on the CFE moratorium, Iran, and U.S. missile defense. Fried said Russia also seemed prepared to deal more firmly with Iran. Lavrov told the Secretary that they would support Solana in his upcoming talks with the Iranians in advance of a possible third UNSCR on Iran's nuclear obligations. Despite recent high-volume protests on U.S. missile defense plans and Putin's call for a "moratorium" on observing CFE treaty provisions, Fried said neither issue featured high on the Russians' agenda with the Secretary. Fried noted that Secretary Rice had repeated Secretary of Defense Gates' offer of MD cooperation and to listen to Russia's concerns on CFE. Fried commented that Russia could meet its Istanbul CFE obligations by pulling out of their one remaining base in Georgia (Gudauta), and might be enticed to accept a face-saving settlement on Transnistria, such as replacing their forces there with an international peacekeeping operation.

#### RUSSIA'S "MANAGED DEMOCRACY"

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¶19. (C) Fried said that Putin appeared genuinely concerned about public opinion in the run-up to Duma elections and the Presidential succession. While the West focused on government control of the media, the Russian leadership seemed fixated on managing what they did not fully control. They appeared concerned about the public's tendencies toward excessive nationalism and about anti-reformist forces. One of the civil society reps told the Secretary that Russia's growing middle class was the best hope for moving from the current "managed democracy" toward the real thing. The Secretary, Fried said, had assured Putin and Lavrov that the

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U.S. supported a strong, democratic Russia. Fried concluded that the best approach for handling a new, more assertive Russia was to simultaneously pursue partnership where possible and to push back against Russian excesses when necessary.

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